

"THE BALLAD OF THE BIG E"

(The Enterprise) by Allan Sloane & Oliver Wendell
Holmes

(Narrated by Mr. John Carradine)

Now they tell of the Constitution,
That frigate of the line
How the Navy wanted to scrap her,
In eighteen-twenty-nine.

But a poet told her story
Young Oliver Wendell Holmes
And the children rose to save her
In a million American Homes!

Aye, tear her tattered ensign down!
Long has it waved on high,
And many an eye has danced to see
That banner in the sky!

Now she's moored in Charleston Harbor
For kids today to see
How iron men in wooden ships
Fought for Liberty!

Have you seen where it says in the papers
That a flat-top 's doomed to die?
She's up for sale as scrap iron
For the wrecker-men to buy!

She's obsolete and useless,
She can't sail anymore.
Her fighting days are over.
Too old for modern war.

So she's rusting now in mothballs
At the dockside in Bayonne,
But once, She was a lady,
The proudest ship we owned!

No poet to sing her glory,
And bring to American eyes
The tears of pride that would save her --
The mighty ENTERPRISE!

Beneath it rung the battle shout,
And burst the cannon's roar;
The meteor of the ocean air
Shall sweep the clouds no more!

Before we let it happen,
let's go back in history,
To the story and the glories
Of the ship they called "Big E"!

It took two years to build her --
Thirty-four to thirty-six.
She went down the ways at Newport News,
Designation? CV 6.

...and may she say with just pride,
I have done the State some service!
I christen thee -- ENTERPRISE!

Her length was eight twenty seven
One fourteen was her beam,
Her nineteen thousand eight hundred tons
Could do 34 knots at full steam.

On the sixth day of December,
In the year of forty-one,
She was due in at Pearl Harbor,
But the weather slowed her run.

Two hundred miles off Oahu,
Gonzales became number one...
The first to go down off the ENTERPRISE,
That's how she learned war had begun.

Well ---they missed the Big E at Pearl Harbor.
She refueled and went out on patrol.
Then she started to hit at their islands.
Beginning with Kwajalein atoll.

The bag on her first encounter?
Planes 36, ships 8, damaged -- four.
There were only two things they all wanted.
Mail from home -- and a chance at some more.

What is it like on a flat-top?
A floating airbase at sea?
In the ready room...in airplot...in pri-fly...
On the bridge ... the gun gallery?

Is it true that the sailors on duty
By the hulk, as she lies in Bayonne,
Hear voices ... and engines ... and laughter...
And know they don't stand guard alone?

This is something you may have forgotten,
Now that the fighting is done.
For a solid year after Pearl Harbor --
She was the only one.

And what was it like on a mission,
For the pilots off the Big E?
With nothing ahead but the enemy,
Nothing below but the sea?

Before the long flight to the westward,
You signal your wingman, and then --
Together you head for your target.
Will you see each other again?

Now -- the catch at your heart when you spot them!
The puffs of ack-ack from their guns!
The wakes like the tails of white horses!
And the Zekes slanting down from the sun!

What was it like for the pilots?
Your young men up in the sky?
Well -- they say that the air wayss the fairest,
If a sailor has to die.

Four years she scouraged the Pacific,
The ENTERPRISE -- so great,
And have we forgotten so quickly?
The service she's done the State?

Her deck, once red with heroes' blood,
Where knelt the vanquished foe,
No more shall feel the victor's tread,
Or know the conquered knee.

The harpies of the shore shall pluck --
The eagle of the sea!
Now the list of her stars is a long one,
PEARL HARBOR MARCUS
MIDWAY TULAGI
MARSHALL GILBERT STEWART
WAKE GUADACANAL
SHE was in on them all -- the BIG E!

With only one single exception--
One day late for the Coral Sea
Yes, the names of her crewmen are legion
And the roll of her heroes -- is long.

Now hear this -- of the sailors who manned her:
One or two of that glorious throng!
There is one whom they all remember,
Even Admiral Burke knows his fame,

But -- because of the way that it happened,
Nobody knows his name,
Now of three thousand sailors aboard her,
There were only a hundred who flew,
So the tales of her glory must number --
The other brave men of her crew.

On the twenty-sixth day of October,
The second year after the way,
The enemy struck back at the carrier
As he'd never struck before!

Well they tell of a deck ape named Presley,
In the midst of the bombs' deadly rain,
Who wanted no part of safe shelter --
And fought from a deck-bound plane!

So here is a man to remember,
When you think of the flat top BIG E.
The deck ape who shot down the Betty --
Whose bomb blew him into the sea.

Yes, six times they claimed they had sunk her,
But she fought to the end of the war,
And by 15 of August, in the year '45 --
Here was her final score!

This was the total she racked up --
Of foemen who crossed her path,
A record that stands forever,
As evidence of her wrath!

Of Bettys and Zekes -- nine eleven,,
Shot down by her planes or her guns,,
Of ships -- one ninety-two--probably...
Definite -- seventy-one.

And how did the nation repay her?
With William Yoke Baker -- WELL DONE!
But -- will this be the end of her story?
To be cut up and sold by the tom?

Is that fair reward for her valor?
The lady they called the BIG E?
No... The sailors who served her and love her,
Say she'd have been better off lost at sea ...

Yes, better that her shattered hulk,
Should sink beneath the wave,
Her thunders shook the mighty deep.
And that should be her grave.

Nail to the mast her holy flag.
Set every threadbare sail,
And give her to the god of storms.
The lightning and the gale.

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MESSAGE FROM ADMIRAL HALSEY

" My name is Halsey. I'm only one of the
thousands of sailors who loved the Big E,
Just let me read you this clipping."

NAVY TO SCRAP OLD ENTERPRISE

The famed old aircraft carrier ENTERPRISE, veteran of twenty World War II battles in the Pacific, was put up for sale by the Navy today. Now mothballed near Bayonne, New Jersey, the twenty-year-old ship was considered not worth repairing or modernising. Consequently the ENTERPRISE, seventh Navy ship to bear the name, will go to the highest bidder above one million dollars, and it's name will be stricken from the Navy register.

We saved the Constitution to show today's Americans how iron men in wooden ships fought for Liberty. Can't we save the BIG E, to show tomorrow's boys and girls---in an age of jets, and atoms, and guided missiles ---how iron men in a ship of steel--preserved that same Liberty? With the help of any of you --- who may feel about the Big E as we who knew her do---I think we can. I know we should. I pray we do.

AND YOU MAY HELP.....NOW.... BY SENDING IN YOUR
CONTRIBUTIONS TO:

THE U.S.S. ENTERPRISE FUND
C/O ADMIRAL HALSEY
67 BROAD STREET
NEW YORK 4, NEW YORK

P.S. This is our copy of the
"Big E" script and that
we are sending out upon
request.

Thank you.

[Handwritten signature]